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FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH
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INFORMATION POLICY

FILE No. **PB** M 10 | 359 | 4 (Part

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1968/9

FILE No. **PB** M 10 | 359 | 4 PART



Chief Inspector

Inspection Brief - Iraq

Since diplomatic relations were resumed in May 1968 there has been no member of the Embassy's UK-based staff dealing full-time with Information work. One Chancery officer devotes a part of his time to the work and there are in addition two locally-engaged employees. Such an arrangement has become commonplace in the Middle East where opportunities for traditional Information work are limited and Iraq is possibly the most difficult of all Arab countries in that respect.

2. The local Information media are government-controlled and extremely hostile to HMG on most aspects of our policies in the Middle East in particular, and the Third World in general. Hardly a day passes without attacks on HMG or the BBC which, even by Arab standards, are grotesque. It is impossible to counter the attacks in those media and censorship prevents the use of the local version of the Beirut Embassy's bulletin for that purpose. Political Information work is therefore impossible at the present time except to the extent that personal contacts with officials or Ministers can help and even they are prisoners of their own Government's chosen blend of bombast, propaganda, and dogma.

3. Other countries, e.g. Iran, receive their share of stick, however, and Britain in fact retains goodwill among many Iraqis, especially the commercial community. In this we are helped by a common Arab ability to see nothing incompatible about poisonous public attacks and warm regard for most things British other

/than

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than policies. Consequently there is a good demand for our films and TV programmes, a very large readership for the BBC Arabic Service publication, "Huna London" and opportunities for publicity of Britain's non-political achievements.

4. But these do not add up to an onerous burden. There is no obstacle, in terms of work-load, to implementing the Duncan recommendations which would boil down in this case to little more than switching the supervision of the L.E. staff to the Commercial Section. The work-load will indeed diminish when the British Council is running smoothly enough to take over the Embassy film library. We should be glad if the Inspector could examine whether the time is yet ripe to make the handover.

5. These points apart, we see no likelihood of Information work varying enough to affect the staffing in the immediate future.

6. One of the most important functions of the L.E. staff in Baghdad is to ensure that "Huna London" is sent out in good time. In assessing the staffing arrangements the Inspector may like to bear in mind that from next January "Huna London" will become a monthly instead of fortnightly but that its circulation will be allowed to increase up to double its present rate.

(B. R. CURSON)
Information Policy Department
22 August, 1969

are prisoners of their own Government's chosen blend of bombast, propaganda, and dogma.

3. Other countries, e.g. Iran, receive their share of stick, however, and Britain in fact retains goodwill among many Iraqis, especially the commercial community. In this we are helped by a common Arab ability to see nothing incompatible about poisonous public attacks and warm regard for most things British other than policies. Consequently there is a good demand for our films and T.V. programmes, a very large readership for the B.B.C. Arabic Service publication, "Huna London" and opportunities for publicity of Britain's non-political achievements.

4. But these do not add up to an onerous burden. There is no obstacle, in terms of work-load, to implementing the Duncan recommendations which ^{would} boil down in this case to little more than switching the supervision of the L.E. staff to the Commercial Section. The work-load will indeed diminish when the British Council is running smoothly enough to take over the Embassy film library. We should be glad if the Inspector could examine whether the time is yet ripe to make the handover.

5. These points apart, we see no likelihood of Information work varying enough to affect the ^{in the immediate future} staffing. ~~The only slight possibility requiring~~ a change is Baghdad's need for a Press Attaché who would be an Arab of British nationality, able to operate in the press world in a manner impossible for U.K.-based members of the staff to emulate. The Embassy believes that it is most unlikely to

/find

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find such a person but if it does we
~~should wish to recommend his recruitment.~~]

6. One of the most important functions of the L.E. staff in Baghdad is to ensure that "Huna London" is sent out in good time. In assessing the staffing arrangements the Inspector may like to bear in mind that from next January "Huna London" will become a monthly instead of fortnightly but that its circulation will be allowed to increase up to double its present rate.

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RECEIVED IN REGISTRY No. 56 31 DEC 1969 PBM 10/359/4

BRITISH EMBASSY, BAGHDADReport by Mr. B. A. Flack and Mr. D. N. RoyceNovember/December 1969SECTION IVINFORMATION WORK

Mr. Jenner	DS 9 Third Secretary (part-time)
Mr. Abbas Abd Tai	LE III (nearly full-time)
Mr. J. Santourian	LE III (part-time)
Mr. Abdul Rashid Rasul	LE III (part-time)
Mr. Taha Ali	LE IV (part-time)

Mr. Jenner said that in Iraq information media, in order of importance, were radio, newspapers and television. Information work could not lead to any influence with either of the two radio programmes, one run by the Ministry of Information and the second by the Armed Forces. The Embassy were also not achieving any success in securing the re-production of information material in newspapers or periodicals. The press did re-produce material emanating from the Embassies of States with Communist Governments and from the French Embassy. It seemed clear that there was a political ban on using British material.

2. Contacts with editors and journalists were not easy and not particularly fruitful. There was some prospect that a second television channel which would shortly be brought into use and which was expected to produce broadly educational programmes might be willing to take a certain amount of British material, e.g. English teaching series. In the present political climate it had been decided that Iraq's quota of two sponsored visits to the United Kingdom should be taken up by the Commercial and not the Information Department. The most active aspect of information work was the films work with regard to which Mr. Jenner admitted that it was not yet directed to commercial targets.

3. In these circumstances the most effective activity on the information side was the distribution of the B.B.C. magazine "Huna London" which appeared fortnightly and was sent in addressed wrappers from the Information Department in Beirut for transmission to 5,457 addressees in Iraq. The circulation list was compiled by the B.B.C. on the basis of requests received from listeners to the B.B.C. Arabic Services. The only action undertaken in Baghdad was to clear

/the

monthly from
now on.

SECTION IV continued

the consignments from Beirut through the Iraqi Customs, submit a specimen copy for censorship and then put Iraqi stamps on the wrapped magazines and take them to the post.

4. In addition, the Embassy despatched twice weekly 186 copies of an Arabic edition of "News from Britain", again prepared in Beirut, and 30 copies of the English version of the same bulletin. The production of a daily extract from the Baghdad press, which was circulated within the Embassy and to friendly Missions, was regarded as an information activity as was the distribution of 27 copies of "London Calling". The Information Section maintained a library with some 220 films, mainly old, though 30 recent titles have been added, all of which have a commercial slant. In the five month period ending 19 November 1969, 104 films had been lent. Examination of the records suggested that these had mainly been for the entertainment of audiences where little commercial return could be looked for.

5. There is a small amount of responsive work, partly because the British Council have up until now considered that they were not called upon to supply information about the British economy and industrial achievements. Enquirers have, therefore, been passed on to the Embassy.

6. Three of the local staff engaged on information work perform it as a subsidiary part of their job; thus Mr. Santourian is mainly a Consular Clerk, but gives approximately an hour a day to film work; Mr. Rasul is a general non-confidential typist, whose main activity for the Information Section is to type the stencils for the daily press extracts and Mr. Taha Ali combines his task of delivering information material with acting as a general delivery messenger for the Embassy.

7. Only Mr. Abbas Tai gives his major attention to information work, though he is also used as duplicator operator by the whole Embassy. On the information side Mr. Abbas Tai clears consignments of information material out of Customs and with the censors, puts Iraqi stamps on the wrappers in which "Huna London" arrives from Beirut and sends the magazine to the post. He also addresses by hand the fortnightly bulletins. Such responsive work as is done is done by Mr. Abbas Tai. He will shortly have added to his tasks that of distributing 100 copies of the commercial pictorial which Kuwait are producing as a

/monthly

SECTION IV continued

monthly bulletin. He will even then not be very heavily loaded.

8. This account of the information work shows that there is only a limited scope for Press Attaché activity, and that work on behalf of the B.B.C. is purely Post Office. The only direct attempt at information work is the distribution of the bulletin of which 30 copies go to the press, 50 to selected influential people and the balance to Government Departments. Mr. Jenner said that its contents were "watered down commercial". This aptly describes the English editions we have seen. We are doubtful whether any useful purpose is served by distributing the bulletin and asked the Ambassador to consider carefully whether its distribution could not be discontinued. He shares our doubts and distribution will in fact cease. Whilst for the moment mechanical arrangements in Beirut for wrapping and distributing "Huna London" in bulk make it seem improbable that the stamping or franking of the wrappers could be undertaken in Beirut we have asked that consideration should be given to some more mechanical means of putting on the stamps.

9. The proposal to distribute 100 copies of Kuwait's pictorial appears a more promising information venture. Indeed, both Mr. Jenner and the Commercial Counsellor, with whom we discussed this, agreed that such worthwhile information work as could be done was almost certainly commercial. In these circumstances we have suggested to the Ambassador that responsibility for information work should be transferred from the Chancery to the Commercial Department. The only exception would be the daily press extracts which are already prepared by the Chancery translator. We have suggested that the scope for disposing of films, save those with a commercial value, should be examined on the lines described in our joint Minute on information work. We recommend that any proposals the Embassy may make in the light of our Minute should be given sympathetic consideration.

10. The effect of the changes we have suggested to H.M. Ambassador will be only to make the information work more commercial and rationalise its supervision. No saving of staff can be looked for unless and until a mechanical means can be found for franking the "Huna London" wrappers.



BRITISH EMBASSY, BAGHDAD

Report by Mr. B.A. Flack and Mr. D.N. Royce

November/December 1969

ANNEX TO SECTION IV

INFORMATION WORK: IF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DUNCAN COMMITTEE ARE ACCEPTED

8. The British press has little, if any, influence in Iraq. The B.B.C. Arabic Service on the other hand seems to have a substantial audience and seems to be the most effective vehicle for British Information work in this country. Virtually no Information work goes in the pursuit of political objectives, nor would it be possible in the present political climate to change this.

9. Image building, insofar as it is practicable in Iraq, is likely to be best done by the British Council.

10. There is virtually no non-commercial-information work. We are recommending that the present bi-weekly bulletin be suppressed, but this will not result in any staff savings at post.

11 and 12. It is agreed with the post that responsibility for Information work should be transferred from the Chancery to the Commercial Department, that the whole effort should be directed to commercial targets, and that some improvement in the present content and procedures is possible.

13 and 14. The Embassy have been asked to examine with the British Council forming a joint film library. It is doubtful whether there will be any net staff saving, though indirectly the Embassy will gain on the Consular side, because the LE III, at present the Films Clerk/Consular Clerk, will in future become a Consular Clerk, and occasional Films Clerk.

15. No member of the staff is whole-time engaged on Information work. If the one LE III who is largely employed in this Section were cut, the work he does - mainly the distribution of "Huna London" - would have to be done by someone else, and it is doubtful whether there is any spare capacity which could be directed to doing this.

/16.

IN CONFIDENCE



ANNEX TO SECTION IV continued

16. There is very little responsive work. Some re-definition of the responsibility of the British Council, in e.g. economic fields, might eliminate what there is.

17. The distribution of "Huna London" in Iraq is just on 5,500 a fortnight; copies are sent on request from listeners and indicate a sizeable public for the B.B.C.'s Arabic Services. It is doubtful whether a similar sized public would be available for English language broadcasts.

There is virtually no question of choice between cutting B.B.C. broadcasts or cutting official Information services since there is very little by way of Information work and that which there is mainly concerns spreading knowledge about the B.B.C.'s broadcasts.

H.M. AMBASSADOR,

BAGHDAD.

MINUTE NO. 5

INFORMATION WORK

The description of the climate of opinion within which the Information Section of the Embassy must work given to us by Mr. Jenner suggests that in the foreseeable future there will be little scope for traditional Press Attaché work. Such information activity as may be profitable will almost certainly be commercial. In the circumstances we suggest that responsibility for information work should be transferred from the Chancery to Commercial Department. The junior Commercial Officer working in the Chancery Offices would then be known as the Information Officer in addition to his commercial title.

2. We are doubtful whether the present bulletin is sufficiently useful for its distribution to be worthwhile, and we understand that Your Excellency will now stop it altogether. This would tie in with the proposal which we find attractive, that the Embassy should start to distribute in Iraq the commercial pictorial magazine which is being produced by Kuwait.

3. Responsibility for daily press extracts would remain with Chancery. In any case the extracts are produced by the Chancery translator.

4. Our examination of the films operation showed that a high proportion of the films held were old and not particularly commercial in their content. We think that it would be more appropriate if the British Council can be brought to agree that a joint film library should be held by them. It might well be that not all the films held in the Embassy need to be transferred. A good many could perhaps be given away. We are recommending that any proposals you may make for reducing your holding of films should be given sympathetic consideration in London.

5. The Embassy would, however, need to retain a capacity to project films and we see attractions in proposals under consideration between Mr. Jenner and the Commercial Counsellor for a more positive approach to securing showings of films with commercial content to selected audiences. Nor, of course, would the capacity to show, as distinct from lending prestige films, disappear with the film library.

6. The Embassy will, of course, need to retain a stand-by capacity to put out press releases and the Commercial Secretary charged with responsibility for information work will need to maintain such contacts as are possible with the information world.

7. We understand that Your Excellency agrees generally with these views.

(B. A. Flack)

(D. N. Royce)

1 December, 1969

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PBM10/359/4.

Chief Inspector

Inspection Briefs

----- I attach briefs relating to the forthcoming inspections of the following places:

Iran
Iraq
Angola
Cameroon
Somalia
Swaziland
Tanzania.

These briefs are provided on behalf of Information Administration Department as well as Information Policy Department.

2. You will, of course, know only too well that the future of Information work is under close review in the context of the Duncan Report. It may well be that by the time the Inspectors go to the posts covered by the attached briefs, we and you will have a better idea of the way in which the Duncan Information recommendations are to be applied.

(B.R. CURSON)
Information Policy Department
25 August, 1969

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P.A.
8/28/69

Registry
No. *PBM10/359/4***DRAFT** brief

Type 1 +

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

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 Confidential. *

~~Restricted~~
 Unclassified.

PRIVACY MARKING

In Confidence

To:— *Chief Inspector*

From

Mr Curzon

Telephone No. & Ext.

Department

*PD*Inspection Brief - ^{Iraq} ~~Baghdad~~

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/are prisoners

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN

Mr Duncan
*I.A.D.**first*

Mr Bridgman
 I would prefer
 to leave out [].
 I am far from
 sure that IAG could
 support the recruitment
 of an Arab press
 attaché.

*hrt**20/Vin**Mr. Curzon*

Since this is
 a "combined"
 brief it had
 better come out.

B.P. Bridgman
20/8

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Heads of:-

Near Eastern Department
 Personnel Operations Department
 Personnel Policy Department
 Personnel Services Department
 Information Administration Dept.-
 Export Promotion Dept.
 Accommodation Department
 Manpower Section, P.P.D.

Inspection: IRAQ

Mr. Stanley will hold a meeting in his room at 11.00 a.m. on Friday, 9 January, 1970, to discuss the Inspection Report by Mr. Flack and Mr. Royce on H.M. Embassy in Baghdad.

2. I hope that you will be able to attend or be represented.

A. T. Lamb

(A. T. Lamb)
 22 December, 1969

Mr. Hall 0.2

*Would you & Mr. Pridham go to this.
 I thought we had virtually no information effort in
 Iraq & surprised to see in the 'our last time'
 exp. breakdown 1 UK based + 13 L.E staff + FCO
 expenditure of £16,800 shun. This is surely wrong?*

Shep
 23/12/69

Mr. Pridham

If you propose to attend would you also kindly speak for I.A.D.?

The need is to correct P.S.D.'s allocation in this year's and next year's estimates of a U.K.-based staff of 1; 13 locally-engaged staff; £16,800 of FCO information expenditure; and (probably) £2,200 of COI provision. If the inspection recommendations are fully implemented the figures should probably be 0; 1; ?£500; ?£1,000.

/We do not

We do not regard the preparation and typing of daily press extracts as properly information work; and "News from Britain" seems likely to be abandoned in Beirut, does it not, let alone redistributed elsewhere? We can accept the transfer of the film library to the British Council provided we are not, as a result, required to pay for extra staff for the Council and provided satisfactory arrangements are made for lodging commercial and technical subjects in the joint library and for exploitation by the Commercial Section.

In view of paragraph 8 in the Annex to Section IV, the Embassy should presumably be invited to consider stopping the presentation of British newspapers and journals of opinion in Iraq if, in fact, there are any such presentations.

A. C. Hall

I.A.D.
31 December 1969.

(A. C. Hall)

Mr Hill

I will be away as you know. Mr. Hall is quite right about the estimates; the entry for Iraq is a plain mistake. The report on Iraq is now circulating separately and Mr. Hall's third para. refers to it.

B. R. Pridham
1/1

Mr Allen Thomas (P.S.D.)

I mentioned the question of the estimates (para 2 of Mr Hall's minute of 31 Dec) at the Inspector de-briefing today and was invited to pass comments to you.

B. J. Hill H.D.

8.1.

Mr Hill D.H.
14.1.

Thank you. I understand that the question of the Information establishment in Baghdad is currently being discussed by Mr Kipley, Manpower Section PPD & Mr Bayley I.S.D.

P.C.

Mr Thomas
1/1

Mr Hall . IAD

Reference

PBM10/359/4

Inspection of Iraq

There is little of substance in this report and what there is seems acceptable to me. In particular I welcome the proposals to switch responsibility for information work to the Commercial Section and to drop the Beirut bulletin. It also seems likely that the post's proposals on reducing the film library will be acceptable, but we wait and see.

There seems to be no immediate action for I.P.D.

B.Pridham

31/12

I.P.D.

Mr. Pridham


Your minute has, I think, crossed with mine of the same date.

The important thing from IAD's point of view is to get the PSD and Inspectors' records straight. We have virtually no information staff and very little activity in Iraq and ought not to be presented as having it. Distribution of BBC bulletins and preparation of a Chancery press summary does not add up to information activity as I understand it.

I have the usual reservation about film work.

I.A.D.

2 January 1970.


(A. C. Hall)

Head of 1 PD Registry

Registration of Inspectors' Reports

Please enter the attached Section of the Inspectors' Report
on Baghdad in your Departmental file and
inform XE Registry of your relevant file number.

J. D. McDONALD

XE Registry

.....1 PD.....Department/Section

- - -

Any comments you wish to make on the attached
Section of an Inspector's Report should be sent to the
Inspectorate within 30 days of the date below.

Date:30.12.69.....

Scope Of Information Work Of British Embassy In Baghdad Considered. Iraq: Inspectors Brief And Report. 22 Dec. 1969. MS Middle East Online: Iraq, 1914-1974: Selected files from series AIR, CAB, CO, FCO, FO, PREM, T, WO, The National Archives, Kew, UK FCO 26/329. The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5107455533/GDSC?u=webdemo&sid=bookmark-GDSC&xid=163b66c2&pg=1. Accessed 11 Apr. 2022.